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FOOD STAMP FACTS...

Quality Control

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The Food Stamp Program enables low-income households to buy more food of greater variety to improve their diets. To purchase food stamps, participants pay a sum of money based on their family size and net monthly income. They then receive food stamps of a larger value than the amount paid, which they can spend like money at authorized food stores.

The food stamp quality control program was established in 1972 to insure that those who receive food stamps are legally eligible to receive them, are paying the correct purchase requirement, and are receiving the correct amount of food stamps. The quality control program also makes sure that eligible households are not denied food stamps.

1. Who Operates the Quality Control Program?

Each State runs its own quality control program following uniform policies and procedures set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). FNS regional offices review each State's quality control program at least once a year.

2. How Does the Quality Control Program Work?

Quality control personnel select a statistically valid sample of food stamp households in each State. The sample includes households which purchased food stamps, households whose applications were denied, and households whose participation was discontinued. The State reviewer verifies every element of eligibility for the selected households by thoroughly investigating the households' eligibility for program benefits.

The State, by using the information its quality control workers collect, can detect and correct weaknesses in its administration of the Food Stamp Program. In this way, quality control is a management tool for the State to use in improving program administration.

3. What is Done to Correct the Errors Found by Quality Control Reviews?

When a reviewer finds that a household has participated incorrectly, the State agency sends a report to the local food stamp office so that errors can be immediately corrected. Each State also uses accumulated quality control data to identify recurring errors on a Statewide basis, and to develop corrective action plans to reduce overall error rates in the participation of food stamp households.

Any food stamp participant may request a fair hearing if he feels a decision regarding his participation has been unfair. Each household should be informed of its right to a fair hearing at the time of application.

The Food Stamp Facts series includes:

Allotments and Purchase Requirements (FNS-70)	Household Income Deductions (FNS-74)
Work Registration (FNS-71)	Meals-on-Wheels (FNS-75)
Eligibility Requirements (FNS-72)	Recipient Responsibility (FNS-76)
Fair Hearing (FNS-73)	Disaster Situations (FNS-99)

The standards for participation in the Food Stamp Program are the same for everyone without regard to race, color, sex, religious creed, national origin, or political beliefs.

